

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 782

By Shaw

A RESOLUTION to memorialize the life of Nathan "Nearest" Green and his many contributions to Tennessee whiskey.

WHEREAS, slavery and whiskey have a symbiotic relationship in Southern history; male African-American slaves not only made up most of the distilling workforce, but they often played skilled roles in the process of making whiskey; their crucial contributions have only lately been recognized; and

WHEREAS, as Jack Daniel celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2016, the Lynchburg distillery began a new narrative about one of the most important people in the company's history, the late Nathan "Nearest" Green; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Green held three remarkable distinctions: He was the first recorded African-American master distiller of whiskey, the first master distiller for Jack Daniel Distillery, and the man who taught Jack Daniel how to make whiskey; and

WHEREAS, previous lore averred that Dan Call had schooled Jack Daniel in the art of making whiskey, but in truth, he merely instructed Nearest Green, his slave, to do so, referring to Mr. Green as "the best whiskey maker I know of"; and

WHEREAS, after a teetotaler wife and his calling as a preacher forced Dan Call to relinquish his distillery, Jack Daniel began making whiskey there with the help of his mentor and friend Nearest Green and two of Mr. Green's sons, George and Eli; and

WHEREAS, when Mr. Daniel moved his operation to its present location at Cave Spring Hollow sometime after 1881, Nearest Green did not join him at the new distillery, but three of his sons, George, Edde, and Eli, did, and his grandsons Ott, Charlie, and Otis later joined them; and

WHEREAS, all together, seven generations of Nearest Green's family have worked for Jack Daniel Distillery, and three members work there today; and

WHEREAS, Nearest Green was especially skilled in the time-consuming process of charcoal leaching or charcoal mellowing, in which unaged whiskey is passed through several feet of maple charcoal, removing impurities and imparting a slight sweetness; this Lincoln County Process is required for a whiskey to be considered a Tennessee whiskey; and

WHEREAS, although originally attributed to a white man, the Lincoln County Process was perfected, and possibly even brought to the United States, by African-American slaves; Nearest Green was certainly instrumental in the development of this process, which is still used by Jack Daniel Distillery today; and

WHEREAS, after the Civil War, Nearest Green was one of the wealthiest men in the area of any race and the wealthiest African American; surviving photographs reveal a prosperous Green family who had survived the horrors of slavery to enjoy the bounty secured by their whiskey-making patriarch; and

WHEREAS, Nearest Green's instrumental role in creating Tennessee whiskey was first revealed in the 1967 biography *Jack Daniel's Legacy*, which mentions Mr. Green and his descendants some fifty times, but Jack Daniel has only recently begun to embrace Mr. Green's legacy through its social media platforms, marketing campaigns, and tours; and

WHEREAS, to celebrate and preserve that legacy, Nearest Green Memorial Park on the grounds of the future Tennessee Whiskey Museum in Lynchburg will permanently memorialize the life and times of this gifted artisan; and

WHEREAS, this body wishes to honor Nearest Green's memory, reflecting fondly upon his many contributions to the robust economy and vital tourism industry in Lynchburg in particular and Tennessee in general; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE

CONCURRING, that we memorialize the life of Nathan "Nearest" Green, "the best whiskey maker the world never knew."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.